heart beat by rumiberri
the pain never really did fade away-she just made it seem like it did. [AU] [One-Shot][No Magic][Happy Valentine's]
Puella Magi Madoka Magica/□□□□□□□★□□□ - Rated: T - English - Romance/Hurt/Comfort - Chapters: 1 - Words: 4,118 - Reviews: 5 - Favs: 17 - Follows: 2 - Published: Feb 14 - [Madoka K., Homura A.] - Complete

The leaves are starting to fall when her parents approach her and tell her that they're thinking about transferring her over to another city.

There's a well known heart specialist there and the queue for heart transplants is faster since it's not as populated as Tokyo. The change of scenery and fresher air will be better for her as well.

She smiles and agrees easily; she has no friends here and no attachments whatsoever and asks them what their new home is called.

Mitakihara.

The name rolls off her tongue and she nods.

It sounds like a good city to move to.

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Just as promised, the air is fresh and crisp and a new city does in fact help her; she feels healthier and more alive than she has in a long while.

A week passes after she settles in and she's informed that there's already a new heart waiting for her.

She has two hours to decide—and somehow she agrees to accept it.

It's also the last present she'll ever receive from her parents as well.

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The seasons are already changing and a permanent chill settles into the hospital as she recovers from her successful operation. The days pass with bitter pills and constant observations and in a month, it'll be Christmas.

Her birthday.

But she pushes that out of her mind and instead concentrates on walking. Her legs are weak from disuse and she's already out of breath just from moving from her room to the hallway.

But it feels nice to do something and she resolves to make the effort to walk somewhere at least once a day.

The distance slowly grows and by the time snow blankets the city, she's able to walk over to the next ward over where the waiting room resides.

It's the first time in a long while for her to see people that aren't patients or nurses or doctors and she stares in wonder at the variety of individuals inside.

She notices a girl her age dressed in a school uniform, pink bubblegum colored hair standing out amongst the white walls and she wonders if she's waiting for a friend.

A small stab of jealousy—but it disappears as the fatigue from walking this far hits her hard and she turns around to shuffle back to her room.

She gets a fever later that night and the world around her disappears for two weeks as she sleeps.

When she finally wakes up again, Christmas is over, her birthday is gone and the new year has already begun.

And the girl has merely become a faded memory.

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This time she has everything prepared: blanket draped over her shoulders and novel in hand.

It's two weeks before the start of February and she's heading over to the waiting room to sit and read.

A change of scenery—the words bring a small jolt of pain to her heart—but it passes and she continues her shuffle down the hall.

She knows she really shouldn't be here.

There are other people that are sick and they pose a risk to her still recovering body.

But she shoves her doctor's warnings aside as she enters the room.

Like before, it's full of people waiting for their medicine or waiting for *things* and as her eyes scan the room, she notices a familiar shade of pink.

She tilts her head slightly, curious, before shaking out of her stupor and heading for one of the empty seats in the room.

She makes sure to keep her eyes on the floor as she passes in front of that girl on her way there.

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The day to day walk that she has once again started always makes her feel better and everyday she finds herself in the waiting room, novel in hand but eyes watching the other occupants in the room.

More than often her gaze is drawn to the one girl and it takes her two weeks to notice a pattern to her visits.

The girl is only there two, maybe three times a week, usually on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday and she's there waiting as another girl —her friend?— visits someone at the hospital.

Jealousy bubbles in her heart once more as she wishes someone would visit her.

It's the start of February when she settles into her usual seat and when she glances over to the usual spot the girl sits at, she can't help but feel the wave of disappointment when she notices she's not there.

"Excuse me?"

The voice startles her and she jumps slightly as she turns.

"May I sit here?"

She stares as the girl she has been watching gives her a friendly smile. The smile slowly drops as she takes too long to reply.

"Is that a no?" and she quickly shakes her head.

"N-No, t-that's...y-you...i-it's fine," she barely manages to squeak out and the smile presents itself once more.

"Thank you." With a sweep under her skirt, the girl settles into the seat besides her. Another smile merely makes her face flush and she quickly turns to her novel.

She doesn't read a single word that day and is entirely aware of the girl sitting next to her.

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It doesn't take that long until the girl finally turns to her and starts talking. She's friendly—almost naively so, and she learns that her name is Kaname Madoka, that she has a younger brother named Tatsuya and that her parents are named Junko and Tomohisa. She tells her about her friend, Miki Sayaka, that is here to visit another friend, Kamijou Kyousuke, that was recently in a car accident and she can feel the kindness in her words as she worries about his well-being.

In turn, Madoka asks her questions and she stammers out her replies as best as she can.

Her name is Akemi Homura, she is in the hospital recovering from a heart transplant. Her parents... she falters here and Madoka quickly swoops in with an apologetic smile and steers the conversation to different things.

Just as sudden, her friend arrives to pick her up and she flinches as the taller girl stares down at her in evaluation.

"Let's go, Madoka."

"Sure, Sayaka-chan."

Madoka gives her a smile as she stands. "I'll see you soon, Homura-chan."

Only her parents had ever called her by her first name and though it had hurt the first time she had heard it, it just fills her heart with warmth now and she gives Madoka a shy smile.

"S-See you, Kaname-san."

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It's routine now for her to go the waiting room and for Madoka to sit next to her.

They talk about nothing and everything and she wonders if this is how it's like to have a friend.

She likes it.

Two weeks after meeting Madoka, she falls sick again and she's curled up in her bed even though it's a Friday and Madoka is waiting for her.

She coughs lightly and pulls the blankets closer before settling into a feverish sleep.

She's aware of the door to her room opening, too used to visits from nurses and doctors and pays it no mind.

"Homura-chan?" a soft voice cuts through her haze and she turns around. Without her glasses, the figure by her bed is blurry and she squints as she tries to focus.

She sees pink—which reminds her of Madoka—but she has never told her her room number and Madoka has no reason to visit her so it must be a figment of her imagination.

Hallucinations from her sickness.

She closes her eyes once more and the dream Madoka is almost so real that she can feel a gentle hand placed on her forehead. It's cool to the touch and feels nice and she sighs as she tries to fall back asleep.

When she wakes the next morning after her fever breaks, there's a small box of chocolate besides her glasses with a small card that reads 'Happy Valentine's day, Homura-chan' and it's from Madoka.

She blinks and stares.

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She gets better and the days pass.

When White day arrives, she apologizes to Madoka and tells her she has nothing to give her in return for those chocolates on Valentine's.

Madoka merely smiles at her and tells her that her getting better is good enough.

Her health is progressing—minus the random fevers—and the medicine is working properly.

The doctors tell her that maybe she'll be able to leave in a couple of months.

Her heart still hurts and there's moments like these, when Homura is reminded that her parents aren't here anymore and that she has no one but herself to rely on.

She has relatives in Tokyo and maybe Osaka (she's not sure) and she finds out from the doctors that none of them want to take her in.

Arrangements are made and since her condition needs to be monitored, when she's discharged she won't need to stay in an institution though a social worker will be in charge of her until she is old enough to take care of herself.

She has inheritance money from her parents at least and since she'll be staying in Mitakihara, she finds out that she'll be transferring into Madoka's school.

She tells Madoka this and blushes when the girl grins and hugs her hard.

"Really, Homura-chan? I can't wait!"

She smiles and thinks the exact same thing.

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Soon, she's healthy enough that the walk to the waiting room no longer leaves her out of breath.

Even Madoka's friend, Sayaka, tells her that she seems healthier these days.

"I'm always afraid I'm gonna look at you wrong and you'll fall over," Sayaka jokes and Homura always blushes as Madoka scolds her friend in her place.

"How much longer until you're out of the hospital, Homura-chan?"

"One more month," she replies with a smile.

She's afraid, really, of what will happen once she leaves this place but she's also excited.

One month until she'll be able to see Madoka almost everyday.

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The day she leaves the hospital is a Tuesday and she's surprised when Madoka shows up without her asking.

"Ehehe," Madoka laughs and she feels that warmth in her heart build.

On the way to her apartment, they run into a stray cat that Madoka calls Amy and is surprised when it takes an immediate liking to her.

With encouragement from Madoka, she decides to take Amy home; they are both alone so it's makes sense for the two of them to stick together.

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School winds up being an endless cascade of disappointments and when she's worn out from doing warm ups in PE, she can only lament on her shortcomings as she sits off to the side.

A towel is suddenly draped over her head and she glances up to see a familiar face smiling at her.

"It's okay, Homura-chan. I'm pretty bad at sports too."

She feels bad when Madoka sits out the rest of PE with her—though she doesn't entirely mind that she does.

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It's the first test she has taken since coming back to school and she stares at all the red marks in disappointment.

She's missed so much material that she doesn't think she'll ever be able to catch up—she's sure they only allowed her into 2nd year due to her unusual circumstances.

"Homura-chan," a voice has her quickly covering her test with her arms and she turns to Madoka.

"K-Kaname-san..."

"How did you do?" Madoka asks and immediately notices the way her face falls. "Ehehe, you too, huh?" she tells her and holds up her own test paper riddled with red.

"Ah..." Madoka only scored a little higher than her and suddenly she doesn't feel so bad.

The other girl grins and leans closer. "Sayaka-chan's score is worse than mine."

She can't help but laugh at that.

"Do you want to come over and study?"

She blinks though her brows furrow.

"Ehehe," Madoka laughs again and holds up a green notebook. "Don't worry, I borrowed Hitomi-chan's notes. You can sleep over too—and bring Amy along! I'm still jealous she followed you home after she turned me down!"

She smiles and nods.

"S-Sure, Kaname-san. Thank you."

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Her grades slowly improve and though she still needs to take medicine and go to the nurse's room during breaks, she no longer collapses during warm-ups and can at least participate in a third of the activities during PE.

Summer vacation arrives and she spends most of her time over at Madoka's where the AC actually works because her apartment is too old and the manager refuses to fix it even though it's in the contract.

She doesn't mind though, because it lets her stay over at the Kanames and she can pretend that she belongs somewhere for once.

They struggle to finish their homework and suddenly it's back to school and she's back to her still stuffy apartment.

Madoka still invites her over though but once the weather starts cooling, she finds herself declining the offer more often as her excuse to stay over slowly disappears as the leaves start changing.

Madoka is disappointed—but doesn't want to push her away and lets her slink back to the empty apartment.

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The change of seasons reminds her of her parents and as the leaves start falling once more she smiles less and laughs even less.

Madoka immediately notices and Sayaka tries her best to get her to smile.

But when she does, it's the wrong kind and she finds her heart hurting more and more as the month's end draws near.

On the day of Madoka's birthday party, she sets an appointment to see the doctor and misses the celebration.

Her medicine is switched out for a different one and she apologizes to Madoka for not being there.

The pain fades but her heart still hurts and she misses a week of school and sleeps in her bed so that the memories can fade away.

She wakes up disoriented and dizzy and Amy is pawing at her, demanding her to stop that noise in the background.

She fumbles around for her glasses and slips them in place before rising from the bed.

Her legs feel like jelly and her body is light; she hasn't eaten much during her absence and really only woke up to feed and care for Amy.

ding dong

Ah, that must be what had been bothering Amy.

She stumbles and knocks into the wall as she tries to regain her bearings. Her glasses are askew and she wipes at her eyes to clear the cobwebs.

ding dong

"Right..." she mumbles to herself and somehow makes it across the living room to the front door.

She tiptoes and closes one eye to peer into the peep hole—and is greeted by a familiar shade of pink.

"K-Kaname-san…?"

ding dong

"Ah…"

She quickly unlocks the door and pulls it open.

Before she can greet her, Madoka is throwing her arms around her and sobbing in relief.

"Homura-chan! I was so worried about you!"

"K-Kaname-san?"

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Madoka follows her to the cemetery when she goes to meet her parents.

She had missed the funeral while recovering and as she stares at the tombstone that has their names chiseled across, she can't help but sob as the pain in her heart throbs once more.

Madoka holds her close and she sleeps over again that night.

She doesn't notice that Madoka has a duffel of her things in her room but she does notice when Junko tells her she's no longer allowed back into her own apartment.

Amy meows almost in agreement and purrs when Madoka scratches her chin.

"Welcome home, Homura-chan."

She can't help it, the tears pool in her eyes and she's sobbing once more.

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Winter hits Mitakihara and the snow chills her to her bones. She bundles up in the extra warm jacket that Junko has bought her as an

early Christmas present and follows the Kanames as they head to the park to play in the snow.

She's never really had a chance to do something like this and at the end of the day her hands are freezing, her nose is red and her face is flushed from the cold.

It's enough to distract from the pain in her heart and she laughs and smiles and then cries when they surprise her with a birthday cake and a birthday song that's a bit off-key and maybe too high pitched.

"Thank you," she can only say and Madoka has to help her blow out the candles because she's crying too much.

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New year at the temple and Madoka introduces her to an older girl—Tomoe Mami—someone that she had befriended randomly, much like what had happened to her and Madoka.

Madoka gushes about her skills in cooking and the blonde flushes with joy at the words of praise and invites both of them over for snacks the next day.

Madoka agrees and though she's still shy with people she doesn't really know, she nods and Mami smiles.

"Can I invite Sayaka-chan as well, Mami-san?" Madoka asks and the smile on Mami's face grows wider.

"Of course. Any friends of yours are welcome, Kaname-san."

She thinks that Mami seems nice and wonders just how delicious her cooking really is.

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Towards the end of January, she's sick again though this time it's only a cold and it only knocks her down for a week.

She still has a lingering cough but Mami recommends a soothing herbal tea and she's soon back to her normal self.

On the first day of February, she somehow manages to lie to Madoka and for once is by herself as she heads over to Mami's place.

When the blonde opens the door, she's pleasantly surprised to find the shy girl standing in front of her apartment.

"Good afternoon, Akemi-san."

"T-Tomoe-san!" she bows low. "P-Please teach me how to cook!"

She burns the first three batches and has to buy two more bags of chocolate before Mami is satisfied with her results and her eyes are shining and her face is smiling as she proudly looks at her creation.

"Thank you, Tomoe-san!"

Mami smiles at her. "I only helped you a little, Akemi-san. I hope whoever receives your gift will accept your feelings."

She blushes and ducks her head.

"I-It's not like that."

At least, she didn't think it was...

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It's the day of and she can't stop how her heart pounds in her chest as she thinks to the package she has in her bag.

She had baked cookies with Madoka the previous day and she hands out small packages to Sayaka, Hitomi, Mami, Saotome-sensei and to the nurse that has helped her out more than once.

Her batches are plain chocolate chip and she can't help but glance at Madoka who has a bigger pile of treats to pass around—she doesn't really mind though, Madoka is friendly with everyone while she still stutters even around the girl she has almost known for a year.

To her surprise, Madoka approaches her with a smile and presents her with a small box that is different than the gifts she gave everyone else.

It reminds her of the one she received last year and Madoka grins.

"I made it the other day when you had your doctor's appointment. Had to finish before you came back! Happy Valentine's day, Homura-chan!"

And she looks at the package and then to her bag. "A-Ah—"

"Madoka!" Sayaka calls the other girl over from across the room and the words die in her mouth.

She glances down at her bag and then to the box that Madoka has given her and frowns.

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They're in the middle of English when a note is passed and Madoka glances up in confusion before accepting the small slip of paper.

'Please meet me behind the gym once English ends.'

Madoka looks around and Sayaka waggles her eyebrows at her with a grin.

The smaller girl blushes but smiles at the note and the neat writing on the paper.

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As soon as the bell chimes, she exits the classroom at record speed (at least for her) and though she's out of breath and feeling slightly dizzy when she reaches her destination, she grips the box closer and tries to calm her frantic heart beat.

Her eyes are closed and she's trying to remember the words she has rehearsed when a voice calls out to her.

"Homura-chan?"

She whirls around and Madoka is looking at her with a puzzled expression.

"K-Kaname-san!" she quickly hides the box behind her though the smile on Madoka's face shows that she has already seen it.

"The note was from you, Homura-chan?"

She nods and blushes before averting her eyes. "U-Uhm!" She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath before exhaling. "K-Kaname-san!"

"Y-Yes, Homura-chan?"

Opening her eyes, she faces her straight on. "I-I just wanted to thank you for being my f-friend. Y-You've helped me so much this year—and I know it's not much, b-but please accept this as a token of my gratitude!" She holds out the box and ducks her head.

"A-Ah..."

Her pulse increases and she can feel her heart drop as nothing happens.

Fearing the worse, she cracks an eye open and Madoka is staring at her almost in amusement.

"Homura-chan..." there's a smile on her face and she reaches for the box but sighs when she takes it.

"K-Kaname-san?" she straightens up as she notices how disappointed the other girl looks.

Suddenly Madoka grins at her. "I guess it's okay if I take charge since we're both girls."

"U-Uhm?"

Madoka slowly closes the gap in between them until she can feel the breath of the other girl on her face.

"K-Kaname-san?"

Madoka's eyes are lidded as she leans closer. "I was—really happy to see that you were the one that left the note, Homura-chan," her voice is a soft whisper and she freezes in confusion.

"U-Uhm..K-Kana—"

"But," here Madoka laughs softly as pink eyes flicker to lavender before darting back to her lips. "I was expecting a confession—not a 'token of gratitude.' Something..." she moves in closer, "...like this."

And there's a soft weight as something presses against her lips and her eyes widen in surprise. Madoka's eyes are closed and she feels arms wrap against her waist, bringing them closer.

When they finally pull apart, they're breathless and Madoka grins up at her.

"Homura-chan...?"

"Y-Y-Y-Yes?" she squeaks out.

"Will you accept my feelings...?"

She's lightheaded and all she can remember is the feeling of *soft* and in a rare act of bravery, she merely leans forward, eyes closing once she makes sure she's not going to miss and captures Madoka's lips with her own.

Madoka smiles and once they pull apart again she's looking at her expectantly.

"Is that a yes?"

She nods frantically and Madoka grins.

"You know, they say for White day you're supposed to return a gift that's worth three times as much as the original..."

She gulps nervously and Madoka laces their fingers together, keeping a tight hold on her gift and tugs her along.

"Let's head back."

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When they arrive with their hands still intertwined, Sayaka gives a knowing wink and she blushes to the tip of her ears while Madoka looks almost prou**d.**

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AN: Very random one-shot that I somehow managed to write ! Their story makes me sad so here's some fluff :(((

The leaves have long since fallen, and the trees are still bare. The air is crisp, and traces of white can still be seen in the streets, clear reminders that winter is still here.

The holidays have drawn to a close, and another year has gone by. Another birthday has passed; another day, living without—

Past the school gates, and as they enter the courtyard, colourful fliers posted on the bulletin board catch her eye. With a startled jolt, she realizes that the month is ending, and that February will soon begin.

And in a few months, they will be in their second year of high school, and the soon to be third years, like Mami, will be facing their last year before graduation.

She can still remember the entrance ceremony held almost a year ago: the living room has a picture of her and Madoka in their, back then, new high school uniforms, commemorating that occasion.

She smiles sadly, knowing she can no longer share any new milestones in her life with—

She feels a tug on her hand, and turns to find Madoka staring at her in worry.

"Homura-chan? Are you feeling okay?"

She nods. "I'm—fine." She squeezes Madoka's hand, and this time, her smile is happier as she focuses her thoughts on the girl in front of her.

Madoka returns her smile, and squeezes back. "Let's hurry to class; it looks like it's going to snow again."

She glances to the gray skies, "I hope it starts warming up soon..."

There's a gentle bump of her shoulder as Madoka presses closer. "It's okay, Homura-chan. I'll keep you warm."

A small blush joins her smile. She glances down shyly, before looking back up, "m-me too. I'll, uhm, keep you warm, too, Madoka."

"Ehehe, thank you, Homura-chan."

As they continue on their way to class, her eyes once again wander to a particular flier decorated in red and pink.

She frowns.

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The glass is cool in her hands, covered with drops of condensation all along the surface.

A soft clink of ice is heard as she lazily swirls the liquid around. It's a light amber, with a sharp taste, and a pungent smell of alcohol that tickles her nose.

As she tilts her head back, and her lips rest along the rim, she can hear the soft creak of the floorboards, and gentle, hesitant steps heard from the stairs carries through the house.

She smiles lightly, already knowing who is coming to join her.

As she lowers her glass, the alcohol is held in her mouth, swallowed slowly to appreciate the smoky after taste that lingers on her tongue.

With just the right timing, she lifts her head, and a lone figure steps into the kitchen: light purple pajamas, wide, black frames, and nervous lavender eyes that flit about the room.

Her lips tug up in amusement, "you're still up, Homura?"

"Ah..." Her quiet voice squeaks, and she ducks her head. "Yes..."

She smiles wider, one hand now held up as she waves her over. "Come join me?"

After another nervous glance, and another nervous twist of her pajama shirt, Homura shuffles over to the dining room table. She chooses the seat directly across, and pulls the chair back slowly.

She watches her, taking in the small differences she sees in her after all this time.

A little taller, and not as paper thin and fragile as she used to be; slowly, but surely growing out of her shell.

She waits until she settles into her seat. "So, what seems to be on your mind?"

Homura ducks her head, eyes staring at the polished table surface.

She knows to be patient, and merely takes another long sip of her drink, draining the remainder of the glass. She debates another refill, and decides that half a cup will be fine.

She can feel Homura watching her as she pours. Her eyes flicker over, "you're going to have to wait a few more years until you can have some, Homura."

Homura immediately squeaks, and Junko chuckles lightly as she sets the bottle down.

"I... wasn't—uhm, I mean—"

Junko winks. "Why don't you grab a drink, hm?" She gestures over to the kitchen. "Alcohol is a bit too strong for you, but it's always nicer to drink with someone else."

Homura gives her another hesitant glance, before she slowly stands, and walks to the kitchen to do as asked.

Junko smiles to herself, closing her eyes as she listens to Homura moving around. She's opening the cupboards, and pulling open the refrigerator; moving with ease, and more importantly, with familiarity, bearing proof that she's getting used to living here.

Finally, she hears the scrape of the chair across the floor, followed by the light clatter as Homura sets her cup down.

Junko opens her eyes, and immediately notices the cup of milk now on the table. She remembers overhearing her and Madoka's conversation a little while back, and knows the two are trying their best to see if they can still grow despite already hitting high school.

Somehow, she has a feeling that neither one will win at the end, especially since Sayaka is already way ahead of them.

Homura takes a tentative sip, and when Junko is sure that her mouth is empty, she places both her elbows on the table, interlacing her fingers to rest her chin on her bridged hands.

"Now, what seems to be on your mind, Homura?"

Homura absently holds the cup in both her hands. Her eyes flicker down, and then back up to Junko's, until they once again look away.

Finally, her mouth opens, "I... t-there's... uhm..." Even from her seat, Junko can see her face turning red; the colour slowly blossoming even to the tips of her ears. "...it's—" Homura nervously glances to the side, and she does this enough times that Junko follows her movement with her eyes.

There's a paper calendar pinned to the wall—one of the many art projects that Takkun had made in his class. The days that have passed are already crossed out with Takkun's wobbly scrawls, and each holiday for every month is decorated with a coloured marker.

Things click together, and Junko has to refrain from grinning. She clears her throat, and Homura immediately looks at her.

"...Is there something specific you'd like to ask me, Homura?" Her eyes return to the calendar, and she nods at it, showing she understands.

Homura once again ducks her head, this time hiding her eyes with her long bangs. "I..." she sighs softly. "I—don't know what to get her...?"

Junko hums lightly. "Aren't you two going to make chocolates together again this year?"

Homura nods. "Well—yes—but..."

"You'd like to do something more?"

Homura nods again. "Yes..." She shyly glances up. "She—last year... uhm..." Her head once again goes down as she continues to fight back her blush.

Junko smiles; she really did think their relationship to be rather endearing.

"I see," she says out loud.

Homura lifts her head, her eyes staring at Junko's imploringly.

Junko nods, and sits up straight. "Alright, so, what you want to do is—give something to Madoka that will somehow top the gift she gave you last year?"

Homura blinks, but nods hesitantly. "Yes...?"

Junko's brow furrows as she closes her eyes, deep in thought.

Homura is taking another small sip of her drink when Junko suddenly snaps her fingers. It startles her and she jumps, effectively causing her to spill her drink in the process.

"Ah, sorry, Homura." Junko quickly stands, chair scraping back as she moves to help clean up.

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Homura gives a disheartened glance to the drying cloth now draped on the counter.

An arm around her shoulders rouses her from her thoughts, and she turns to see Junko now standing next to her.

"Alright, as I was saying, I thought of the perfect plan for you."

Something about Junko's expression has Homura regretting asking her for help, but she knows it's already too late.

Junko winks. "Leave it all up to me, Homura. Madoka will definitely have a Valentine's she won't forget." Her dark purple eyes seem to twinkle, and she leans in almost conspiratorially, "she'll definitely have to try her best to pay you back on White day."

Homura chokes on air. "K-Kaname-san?"

Junko pats her on the back; gently, because Homura's still fragile in certain aspects, mainly her body. "Now, what did I tell you about calling me 'Kaname-san?'"

"Ah..."

Junko quirks an eyebrow at her, and Homura looks down.

"Uhm... Ju...Junko-san...?"

She smiles. "Yes, Homura?"

"...May I ask—what... you're, uhm, planning...?"

Instead of replying, Junko grins, pulling Homura close for an one armed hug. "Leave this to me, Homura. If I have some free time tomorrow during my lunch break, I'll start picking up supplies."

"Su...pplies...?"

Junko nods, and this time Homura squeaks when Junko leans down to press her cheek against hers. "You and Madoka are so cute together."

It's then that Homura finally registers the smell of alcohol on Junko's breath. Her eyes widen. "J-Junko-san...?"

"Hmm?"

"...Are you, uhm... perhaps... drunk...?"

Junko shakes with laughter, her voice carrying loudly in the quiet house. "I haven't had that much to drink, Homura."

Homura nervously glances to the bottle: half empty, but she doesn't know how much Junko had started with.

Junko punches a sudden fist into the air, as her other arm still holds onto Homura tightly. "We'll have Madoka swooning over you, if it's the last thing I do, Homura!"

Homura ducks her head, embarrassed, and glad that Madoka is asleep. "Uhm..."

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There's still time, around two weeks, and with school, homework, and club activities, she almost forgets of Junko's plans.

Almost.

Every morning during breakfast, she's sneaking glances at Junko, who responds with a well timed wink, before she continues whatever conversation with Madoka or Tomohisa or Takkun.

She knows Junko wants her to rely on her, but when another day passes, and it's almost one week until, she starts panicking, and decides for her own back-up plan.

Which means she's once again slamming her head against the wall, trying to think of something.

The next day, while Madoka has to briefly step away for a health committee meeting, Homura makes her way over to the next class, nervously fidgeting with her hands as she tries to figure out the best time to interrupt Sayaka's and Hitomi's conversation.

Too nervous, she doesn't notice their voices taper off.

"Akemi-san?"

She jumps, startled. "Ah, uhm, I'm sorry," she readjusts her glasses, "yes, Shizuki-san...?"

Hitomi and Sayaka share an amused smile. "Is there something the matter?"

"Ah..."

Sayaka stands, and in two steps, throws her arm over Homura's shoulder. Her posture slouches from the sudden weight, and there's a small squeak escaping her mouth before she can stop herself.

"I know what's wrong, Homura-chan~" Sayaka says, her voice light and teasing.

Homura's eyes dart around, meeting Hitomi's briefly, before they drop to the ground. "...M-Miki-san, uhm... t-that is..."

Sayaka grins, squeezing Homura's shoulder. "Obviously, love is in the air."

Homura ducks her head further, "M-Miki-san—"

"And you, are agonizing what to get Madoka for Valentine's."

Her eyes widen, and she lifts her head to stare at Sayaka in surprise. "Uhm... h-how...?"

Here, Hitomi coughs into her hand, and they turn to face her. "Ah, it's actually quite obvious, Akemi-san."

A slow burn travels from Homura's neck, warming her cheeks and turning her pale complexion red.

Sayaka grins and laughs loudly. "However," she leans in closer, making a show of looking around the room first, before, "there's—also someone else who's worrying about the same thing."

Homura blinks, "who...?"

Sayaka sighs, and her other hand comes down, tapping Homura gently on the forehead. "Seriously, you two are both so oblivious sometimes, I'm still amazed the two of you got together before I could even find someone."

There's a certain hint of bitterness in her voice, and Homura is rendered speechless, unsure of how to proceed.

Hitomi glances away, her usually strong gaze wavering as she smooths down her skirt.

Sayaka laughs loudly—maybe a bit forcefully, and a few of the students look to her direction. She ignores them, instead finally letting Homura go.

"Well, not that you two aren't cute," she says with a wink, trying to break the awkward atmosphere. "But, well, I'm sure you have some ideas, so," she holds out her arms, "tell us, and we," she gestures to Hitomi, "the love cupids, will tell you which idea seems best."

Hitomi's lips quirk up, "love cupids, Sayaka-san?"

Homura fixes her hair back into place, trying to stall.

Sayaka places her hands on her hips. "Madoka's going to come back soon," she reminds her.

"Ah..." She ducks her head, fingers now nervously pressing together, "w-well, I was thinking..."

\\

She leans her forehead against her arms, rolling her head from side to side in frustration. Even with input from the other two, she's still undecided, and still unprepared.

And the days are counting down, and before she knows it, it will be too late.

A sudden knock on the door has her sitting up abruptly. A quick glance to the clock, before she calls out, "y-yes...?"

The door opens, and she's absently rubbing the red spot on her forehead when Junko greets her, still dressed in her work clothes.

"Still awake?" she asks, eyes glancing around; Homura's room is still sparsely furnished, though she recognizes a few plushies on her bed as Madoka's, along with a few familiar chairs pushed against the wall.

From her cat bed, Amy opens one eye, before closing it again in disinterest.

Homura lowers her head, hands moving down to rest in her lap, "y-yes..."

Junko steps inside, and when Homura hears the rustle of a bag, she glances over curiously.

Junko smiles. "It took me a while, but I managed to get everything together..."

Homura blinks, tilting her head, and trying to read the label on the bag. "You, uhm, did...?"

Junko nods, closing the door behind her. She holds up the bag. "Now, let's start part one of wooing Kaname Madoka," she says with a cheeky grin.

Homura blinks in response.

/

She paces nervously, legs moving, and then stopping every few steps. Another glance down to her legs, before she slides her hand down her calf, not at all used to the thin fabric compared to her usual socks.

"Homura-chan?" A familiar voice, and a soft knock on her door has her immediately withdrawing her hand.

She straightens up. "Y-Yes...?"

"Is everything okay? Your breakfast is getting cold."

She checks the time, and with a bit of panic, scrambles for her book bag by her desk. As she passes Amy, she pets her once, earning her a disgruntled meow and a lazy paw swiped in her general direction. She smiles, before she hurriedly pulls open the door. Madoka immediately turns around, face worried.

"I'm—sorry..." Homura says softly, "I, uhm, lost track of time..."

Madoka searches her eyes, "is everything okay?"

Homura nods. "Y-Yes. There's," she barely resists glancing down, "uhm, I'm—I'm okay..."

Madoka pauses, before she steps forward and wraps her arms around Homura's waist. She pulls her closer, head tilting up, and Homura leans down, meeting her halfway.

Madoka smiles, kissing her once more. "Are you sure you're okay?" She gently brushes Homura's bangs back. "It's—not your medicine again, is it?"

Flushing lightly, Homura shakes her head. "N-No, I'm okay. Really."

Another lingering hug, until Madoka reluctantly detaches herself. "Okay." She takes Homura's hand, and starts leading her over to the stairs. She stops before they descend, eyes trailing down, "I like your tights, Homura-chan."

Homura blinks, "ah... uhm, thank you..." She moves forward, only turning back when she realizes that Madoka isn't moving, and that she's still staring for some reason. "...Madoka?"

Madoka quickly turns her head away, coughing into her hand. "Uhm, yes, Homura-chan?"

Homura leans closer, noticing Madoka's cheeks seem tinged red. "Is—everything alright?"

"Yes," Madoka tugs her forward, "let's—get to breakfast, Homura-chan."

Confused, she follows after Madoka, staring at the back of her head, and wondering what had distracted her.

\\

The second step, and she finds this one is even harder to do.

After pulling on her tights, she spends the next ten minutes in front of the mirror, trying, and failing many, many times; she's just glad she had set her alarm earlier today.

Finally, the world is once again in focus, and she blinks, eyes moving around as her vision seems even clearer than usual. It doesn't offset the uncomfortable feeling however, and she's moving to rub her eye, but barely catches herself from doing so.

She blinks again, still trying to acclimate herself.

Like yesterday, there's another knock, followed by a familiar voice. "Homura-chan?"

She quickly grabs her frames from her table, stuffing them into their case, before she deposits it into her book bag. Once the bag is clicked shut, and she wakes Amy as usual, she moves to open the door.

Madoka smiles when she sees her, though her smile freezes when she notices Homura's appearance.

Nervously, Homura fidgets with her bag. "S-Sorry, I... lost track of time again..."

Madoka's brow furrows lightly, eyes evaluating Homura's face—at her new look. She leans forward, and Homura kisses her back.

Madoka pulls away. "...I," her hand lightly trails down Homura's cheek, "thought you didn't like wearing your contacts?"

Homura shivers at Madoka's touch. "Uhm, I was—thinking that maybe I could... try for a change of pace...?"

Madoka hums lightly, leaning forward once more to kiss Homura's lips. "...You do look..." Her eyes flicker down to her black tights, "...different, Homura-chan."

Homura blinks. "I-In... a good way, or uhm, a b-bad way...?"

Madoka pauses, "just—different."

"...Madoka?"

/

At school, she gets compliments throughout her classes, and Madoka's not the only one noticing how 'different' Homura looks.

Heads are turning, enough that Madoka makes sure to hold Homura's hand at every possible moment. Homura blushes, still not quite used to public affection, but she smiles to herself, and doesn't notice when Madoka glares at all the eyes that tend to linger a bit too long on her girlfriend.

\\

She takes in a deep breath, staring blankly at her reflection, and maybe almost not recognizing herself.

There's a small twinge in her chest at the familiar shade of lavender, but she quickly swallows that down. She brushes her hair back, fingers running through the strands. Before she can stop herself, she's parting her hair in half, and then into thirds. She expertly weaves them together, and is halfway done with one braid when she finally remembers.

Her hands drop to her side, and her hair immediately unravels. She turns around to view the back, and notices there's a strange split in the middle that makes her hair fan out, and no matter how many times she brushes it down, it somehow remains that way.

Another curious glance to the stranger in the mirror, before once again, just like these past two days, there's a knock on her door.

"Homura-chan?"

She double checks her bag, making sure her glasses are inside. As she steps towards the door, she gently nudges Amy as she passes her by.

Another deep breath as she twists the knob, and pulls the door open.

Again, Madoka freezes in place, eyes now darting around, taking in the sight of Homura in front of her.

"G-Good morning, Madoka..." She nervously wants to tug her braids, and her hands are moving, before she realizes what she's doing, and they're quickly dropped to her side.

"Morning, Homura-chan," Madoka murmurs. She steps forward as Homura does the same.

She feels Madoka wrap her arms around her, and there's the sensation of fingers gently threading through her hair.

"You're... trying out a new style?" Madoka asks softly into her ear.

She hesitantly nods. "Y-Yes... a," she tries to remember what Junko had told her, "change of uhm, pace...?"

Madoka remains quiet, still running her hands through Homura's silky hair. "You look nice, Homura-chan," she whispers.

Homura blinks, pulling back in confusion. "W-What's wrong?"

Madoka smiles, shaking her head. She takes Homura's hand, interlacing their fingers, "let's get to breakfast, Homura-chan."

She's pulled along, and once again, she's left staring at Madoka's back in confusion.

/

Step three of Junko's plan, and this one has a more noticeable effect in school.

Strangely enough, other students that have never spoken to her are suddenly trying to make small talk. She can feel eyes on her as she walks through the halls, and for some reason, Madoka seems more irritable, snapping at anyone that tries to approach her.

It mostly confuses her, and when Madoka pulls her away, rattling off an excuse for visiting the nurse's office so they can spend some time together, she doesn't exactly mind.

\\

That evening, and the house smells like chocolate and cookies and cake. With help from Madoka's dad, each girl makes a set of baked goods that they're going to give to their teachers and friends for tomorrow.

Per their agreement, they had worked on the chocolates together, and there's two boxes larger than the others set aside.

As she wraps each small bundle of treats in cellophane, she sneaks quick glances at Madoka.

She blushes, thinking of the plans for tomorrow. Though she's nervous, she's also excited, and she's hoping that things will turn out alright.

/

She doesn't get much sleep that night, and she's already dismissing her alarm an hour before it's set to ring; she's too wound up, and decides that she'll just take the extra time to get ready.

She's starting to get used to wearing tights, though the same can't be said of her contacts. She's at least a few minutes faster today, and the one thing she does like is that they're much clearer than her glasses ever were.

It's still unnerving to see herself in the mirror though, with lavender eyes that reminds her so much of someone else. She swallows heavily, pushing that thought aside, and turns to one of the final steps that Junko had included in her plans.

She takes a deep breath, before she gently scoops up the item into her hand. After much deliberation, they had decided on her having her hair down, with these added as a decoration.

She gazes at the item, and, still blushing, she brushes her hair back, fingers winding around the fabric to wrap it around her head.

As she stares at her reflection, at the bright colour that has replaced her usual headband, a smile bubbles up from within. She glances to Amy, and gently pokes her in the stomach.

One lazy eye cracks open.

"Amy, how do I look...?"

Amy turns over in her bed, once again hiding her face into her body. A muffled meow is her response, and she smiles, reaching over to gently scratch Amy on the ears.

"Wish me luck..."

\\

There's still an hour until breakfast, and she shuffles along the hallway, heading for the stairs. The house still smells like cake and cookies, and she takes a deep breath, smiling at the comforting smell and the memories attached with it.

As she makes her way down the stairs, shifting her weight slightly on the fourth step that creaks louder than the others, she pauses, hearing sounds coming from below.

Curious, she continues on her way down to the kitchen. She freezes when she sees a familiar figure hunched over the kitchen counter, eyebrows furrowed in concentration.

She looks around nervously; she didn't think anybody would be awake at this time.

Madoka is still absorbed in her task, and she slowly relaxes, curiosity growing with each passing second.

Slowly, she makes her way over.

So focused, she doesn't see the small toy car on the floor, and she hisses in pain when the sharp metal jabs into her foot.

Madoka jumps, squeaking loudly as she drops the pipette in her hands. She turns to see Homura leaning over, one eye closed from the lingering pain.

"Homura-chan! You scared me!"

"I'm—sorry," she tells her, "I didn't mean to..."

Finally noticing her bent posture, Madoka quickly walks over. "Are you okay?"

Homura nods, "yes, I'm fine, just—" she grabs Takkun's toy, and holds it up for Madoka to see, "...Takkun left his toy out again."

"Ahh," Madoka sighs in exasperation. She collects the toy, setting it aside on the table, before she crouches to examine Homura's foot. "Let me see? It didn't draw blood, did it?"

Blushing, Homura pulls her foot back. "N-No, it's fine. I'm—"

"Homura-chan."

She sighs, and using the table to keep balance, she obediently lifts her leg. She fights back the shivers as Madoka examines her foot—stockings and all, though after a while, she notices that Madoka has stopped, yet she's still staring.

"Uhm, Madoka...?"

Madoka quickly looks away, "s-sorry, Homura-chan. Your, uh, foot is uhm, f-fine..." She stands, and absently glances to side.

Homura blinks, head tilting in confusion. "Uhm, thank you..." Her voice trails off when she sees that Madoka's face is red. "...Madoka?"

Madoka coughs into her hand. "Yes, Homura-chan?"

"Are you alright? You seem, uhm," she blinks, "a bit flustered...?"

Madoka shakes her head, and turns to face her with a smile. "No—" She freezes, her eyes catching a familiar red in Homura's hair.

"T-They're not—yours..." Homura ducks her head, her own cheeks warming as Madoka connects the dots. "It's, uhm..."

Madoka smiles, moving forward to slip her arms around Homura's waist, making sure to avoid touching her with her icing covered hands. "...You look nice, Homura-chan."

"Uhm, thank you..."

Madoka smiles when she sees Homura's flushed cheeks. A timid glance of lavender, and Madoka leans forward, tipping her head up to catch her lips with Homura's.

She pulls back, "morning, Homura-chan. Happy Valentine's day."

A shy glance, "H-Happy Valentine's day, Madoka."

Madoka remains holding her, liking the familiar feel of Homura's body heat against her. "You're up early."

Homura hums softly, blinking when she realizes her eyes had closed. "I—uhm, couldn't sleep, really..." She moves, peering over to the counter. "What were you, uhm, doing...?"

Madoka sighs, her breath tickling Homura's neck. She gently moves away, and leads her to the kitchen.

"Well, I was hoping to get everything done before you woke up, but, since the surprise is already no longer a surprise..."

They walk to the counter, and Madoka shows off her project with a flourish of her hand.

"I've been practicing," Madoka murmurs nervously. "It's—still not as good as I'd like them to be, but..."

Homura stares at the cookies on the counter: heart shaped, and topped with drawings made of icing—that bear an uncanny resemblance to herself and Madoka.

"It's..." She reaches forward, but stops halfway. She turns to Madoka, who is now washing her hands, "i-is it alright if I...?"

Madoka nods, shutting off the tap to wipe her hands dry. "Of course, Homura-chan. They're—yours, after all."

As if afraid she's going to somehow break them, her hands shake as she nervously reaches out.

Madoka smiles, and in another moment, she's covering Homura's hands with her own, and guiding them over. "You're fine, Homura-chan. They won't break," she frowns, "or at least they shouldn't..."

Homura holds one designed with Madoka's face, and turns it from side to side. She smiles in wonder, "it's really, really good." She glances up, finding Madoka watching her, "you're really talented, Madoka. Especially considering they're so small..."

Madoka blushes lightly, "it was—I mean, I... It was nothing..."

Homura shakes her head, eyebrows now dipping down. "Not everyone can do this; I know you, and you probably worked really hard to get them to look like this." She glances down, her fingers gently brushing the cookie in her hand. "How—long did it take you?"

Madoka scratches her cheek, eyes darting to the side. "It's hard to estimate, because I could only really practice when you weren't home, so..."

Homura nods patiently, waiting, and finally—

"...It took me a few batches at least; I kept messing up the frosting, and they weren't turning out like how I designed them."

Homura looks at her, a small smile still on her lips. "They're—really, really good, Madoka."

Smiling shyly, Madoka moves forward, wrapping her arm around Homura as she presses against her side. "Thank you, Homura-chan. But, you haven't even tried it yet?"

Homura blinks, staring at the cookie in her hand. "But, it seems like such a waste...

Madoka takes the cookie from her, and instead holds it out. "I can make more, Homura-chan. Say 'ah.'"

Homura stiffens, eyes now nervously shifting from Madoka, and then to her hand. She swallows nervously as Madoka patiently holds the cookie out.

"A-Ah..."

Madoka feeds her, slipping the cookie into her opened mouth. She blushes, feeling her temperature noticeable rise as she chews while Madoka watches her closely.

"How is it?"

She finishes her piece, tongue darting out to lick the crumbs off her lips. "Really good." She glances down, and as if knowing what she's thinking, Madoka moves to grab another one.

"'Ah,'" Madoka repeats.

Another nervous swallow, before she once again opens her mouth. "A-Ah..."

As she's chewing, a thought hits her, and she tries her best to fight down her blush. Tentatively, she reaches for a cookie. Madoka moves to intercept her, but Homura reaches for one decorated with purple icing.

Madoka blinks as a cookie is held to her mouth.

Her hand trembles lightly, "s-say 'ah,' Madoka..."

Madoka smiles, before she leans forward, "ah..."

She's still blushing when she pulls her hand away. "H-How is it...?"

"Mm," Madoka chews slowly, "it's good, but..." she swallows, eyes half lidded, "maybe I need to try another one?"

Homura stares at her for a second, and it isn't until Madoka opens her mouth, eyebrows lifting, that she realizes what Madoka means.

"O-Oh!" She quickly reaches for another cookie, and deposits that into Madoka's waiting mouth.

Madoka's smiling as she chews, and she leans against Homura, fitting her head into the crook of her neck. "We should save some for later," she says softly into her ear.

As expected, Homura squeaks.

Grinning, Madoka turns to place a kiss on her cheek. "Did I ever tell you that you're really cute, Homura-chan?"

Eyes wide, Homura stiffens. "Ah, uhm, you're—" she turns her head away, "c-cute too, Madoka..."

Pleased, Madoka closes her eyes, pressing closer to Homura.

/

She slips into her seat, now done with giving out the last bundle to the school nurse. She looks around the room curiously, eyes searching for a familiar figure amongst the random students milling about.

"Akemi-san?"

She blinks, head turning at the unfamiliar voice. She pulls back in her seat, eyes nervously flicking to the three figures surrounding her desk.

Her hands automatically grab at the ends of her jacket. "Uhm, c-can I help you...?" She glances away, searching the room once again for Madoka, or hoping that Sayaka or Hitomi have somehow wandered in. Her pulse quickens when there's no one to be seen.

One of the girls smiles, and Homura flinches when she sees her hands move from behind her back.

She blinks in surprise at the small white box presented in front of her.

"We—never really got a chance to talk to you much, Akemi-san," the girl says, still smiling, "it was kind of intimidating since you already seemed so close to Kaname-san."

The other two girls hold out their own small packages, and Homura stares at them blankly. "I—uhm," she glances down to her bag hanging on the side of her desk, already knowing it's empty, except for the few obligatory chocolates she has received from Sayaka and Hitomi. "I'm sorry, I—uhm, don't have anything," her eyes flicker to the side, "for any of you..."

One of them giggles, and gently places the box onto the desk. "It's fine, Akemi-san! Happy Valentine's day! Maybe later we could all go out to karaoke or something?"

Homura shyly ducks her head, "uhm... that is..."

There's a gentle tap on her desk, and Homura looks up to see all three girls moving away. One of them glances behind her, and she turns around as hands pounce on her shoulders.

"Hey, someone's looking a bit popular right here," Sayaka says with a friendly grin.

"We'll talk later, Akemi-san." They wave, and she gives a weak wave back.

As soon as they're out of ear-shot, Sayaka leans down, one eyebrow quirked, "what was that about?"

Homura lowers her hand, now eying the packages on her desk. "I'm, uhm, not sure."

Sayaka picks one of them up, noticing the ribbons and the careful wrappings; her eyes narrow slightly, and she scoops up all three into her hands.

Homura blinks, but Sayaka gives her a wink.

"I'll go return these, before these girls get the wrong idea." She pats Homura's shoulder once, and then heads across the room.

Homura follows her with her eyes, though a familiar voice, followed by a familiar weight leaning against her has her looking away.

"Homura-chan, I stopped by the nurse's office, but you were already gone. I guess I barely missed you." Madoka wraps her arm around her shoulders, leaning close for a half hug.

"Oh," she turns to Madoka, already forgetting about the other three when she sees her familiar face, "did you finish passing out your chocolates?"

Madoka nods, "yes." She leans her head against Homura's, absently staring across, and notices a familiar shade of blue. "Ah, Sayaka-chan's just as popular as ever..."

"Hm?" Homura blinks.

"She already received a few chocolates from some other girls in the other classes, too," Madoka murmurs, nodding to the boxes in Sayaka's hands.

Homura nervously glances away. "O-Oh... uhm, yes, she's—quite popular..."

Madoka smiles, "Sayaka-chan was thinking about growing her hair out, though I don't think that'll really help much."

Homura nods absently, and it finally dawns on her what those girls had been doing. Her eyes widen, and she gives Madoka a nervous glance, but luckily she's still focused on Sayaka.

She makes a mental note to thank the other girl later.

She sighs softly, leaning her weight against Madoka as her eyebrows furrow.

Those three have never shown her any interest, whatsoever, and she knows the only reason has to be the changes in her appearance these past few days.

Her eyes flicker to Madoka, and she wonders what she thinks of her new look.

\\

For the fifth time, she lets go of Madoka's hand, nervously wiping her sweaty palm against her skirt, before Madoka once again reaches for her hand.

"Homura-chan?" She leans forward in order to see Homura's face that's hidden behind her bangs, "what's wrong?"

Homura quickly shakes her head, "n-nothing's wrong..."

Madoka stops walking, pulling Homura back. "Homura-chan—"

She swallows nervously, and takes the initiative to tug Madoka forward. "I, uhm, haven't," she looks away, "given you your present yet..." she turns back, eyes darting around, "it's, uhm, at home, so..."

Madoka moves faster, joining her side. She smiles, leaning in once again. "But, you already gave me chocolates this morning?"

Homura nods, "it's—" she blushes, "there's, uhm, more than just that..."

Madoka's smile grows wider. "Really?"

Silently, she nods again.

Madoka pauses, before she widens her stride, easily overtaking Homura. "Hurry up, Homura-chan! You're walking too slow!"

Homura squeaks as Madoka walks faster, dragging her arm forward, and she along with it. "M-Madoka—"

Madoka gives her a look over her shoulder, and the joy on her face has Homura's protests trailing off.

Just seeing her so excited makes her want to keep her happy for as ever long as possible.

She smiles, and allows herself to be guided along.

/

"We're home!" She pauses in taking off her shoes, listening, and not hearing a response.

"Uhm."

She glances over to see Homura standing at her side. "Hm?"

"...Your dad is most likely at Takkun's school right now...?"

"Oh!" Madoka smiles, gently tapping her head with her fist. "Right—Takkun has that conference party thing today..."

Homura nervously grips her skirt, before relaxing her hand. "Madoka?"

"Hm?"

"I'm going to get changed, and uhm... then we'll head out."

Madoka blinks. "Are we—going somewhere...?"

Homura walks inside with Madoka following after her in confusion.

"What should I wear, Homura-chan? Is it—"

Homura reaches for her hand, and intertwines their fingers together. "It's okay," she says softly, "I have, uhm, an outfit picked out for you already..."

Madoka stares at her in surprise. "You do?"

Homura nods, leading her up the stairs.

"Where are we going? Will we be home in time for dinner? What—"

Amused, Homura stops walking and turns around to place one finger on Madoka's lips, effectively stopping the barrage of questions. "It's a surprise." She blushes, and pulls her hand back. "I-I'll get your outfit, and then you can get ready." She glances to the side, raising her hand to gently brush Madoka's hair. "And, before you ask, it doesn't matter how you set your hair. You're..." her eyes flicker down with a small smile, "you're beautiful, no matter what."

Madoka's eyes widen, her cheeks heating at Homura's honest words. "Homura-chan..."

Whatever confidence Homura has slowly dwindles down, and she feels warmth creep up her neck. "I-I'll go—get your outfit, so—"

She hurriedly walks away. In her haste, she trips over her own feet, and barely manages to catch herself against the wall.

"Homura-chan—"

She waves Madoka back, "I-I'm okay!" she squeaks out, pushing from the wall to continue to her room.

Madoka presses her hands to her cheeks, trying to control her own temperature as she watches Homura move down the hall. She finds it hard to keep the smile from her face, and she dips her head down, grinning widely to herself.

/

She takes another deep breath, trying to calm her nerves. Her palms are flat against the wall, and she can feel her legs shaking, knees almost knocking together. Before she can dwell on it further, she hears the door open, and her head turns almost automatically.

Unconsciously, she pushes away from the wall, lips parted, eyes taking in the sight of—

Her breath catches, and there's a familiar pull in her chest. She smiles, eyes now glistening.

Shyly, Madoka brushes down her skirt. "Does it—look strange?"

Homura quickly shakes her head. "N-No! Of course not! You're—" her eyes dart around, knowing that Junko had chosen the right outfit; how the pink top, and the white skirt matches Madoka's lightly tanned skin perfectly.

Madoka had opted to keep her hair down, and Homura's back straightens when she sees that her ribbons are now tied in the same style as her own.

"Beautiful..." she whispers softly.

Madoka grins, absently brushing her hair back from her face. "Thank you, Homura-chan." She lets the sight of Homura sink in: a simple white dress with a purple cardigan, "you're—" she moves closer, never once letting her eyes leave Homura's.

When she's close enough, she slips her arms around Homura's waist, and leans forward. One kiss, and Homura starts to move away, but Madoka places a hand behind her neck, pressing her closer, and deepening their kiss.

Homura pulls back, taking in a gulp of air, "M-Mado—mmf—" Her back hits the wall, and she braces against it, bearing most of their weight as Madoka has her body flushed against hers.

They're both breathing heavily when Madoka finally lets go. She smiles, her breaths matching Homura's as they try and recover.

"You look—really, really nice, Homura-chan."

Homura swallows heavily, eyes nervously shooting away when she sees Madoka still looking at her with a certain gleam in her eye. "We uhm, n-need to leave s-soon, Madoka..."

Madoka sighs softly, resting her head against Homura's collar bone. "I... wouldn't mind staying home with you though, Homura-chan..."

She sucks in a breath, "Madoka...?"

Madoka smiles, pulling back to straighten up. "But, we should get going." She takes Homura's hand, and squeezes it lightly. "I'm looking forward to your 'surprise,' Homura-chan."

She squeaks in response, "y-yes! I, uhm..."

Madoka grins, tugging Homura away from the wall. "Let's go, Homura-chan."

"O.." she gives Madoka a shy glance, before her lips tug into a small smile, "okay..."

/

Everywhere they look, the windows in the stores are filled with hearts and specials for couples during Valentine's.

They walk slowly down the streets, hand in hand, smiling, and enjoying each other's company.

As they pass another couple, Madoka frowns when she sees the girl giggle in their direction.

She opens her mouth, eyes following them, but stops when she feels a tug on her hand. Her attention turns to Homura, who gives her a small shake of her head.

"Homu—"

Homura smiles instead; a gentle, small smile that catches Madoka off-guard.

"It's fine; we're not late, but," she glances to the couple's back, "there are better things to do than to worry about that." She pulls Madoka along, fingers wrapping around hers as they continue walking.

Madoka exhales slowly, a frown still marring her face.

Homura gently bumps their shoulders together, "please don't be upset?"

Madoka quickly shakes her head. "No—you're right. How could I be upset when I'm on a Valentine's date with Homura-chan?" Her lips tug up, and she grins at Homura. "Can I have a hint at least?"

"Ah..." Homura glances away, trying to resist Madoka's wide eyes.

"Homura-chaaan." Madoka leans closer.

She turns her head. "It's—a surprise!"

When there's no reply, Homura glances over curiously, and she's hit with the sight of Madoka with her bottom lip jutting out, eyes gazing at her.

"Pleaseeee?"

She's weak to that voice and to that face, and Madoka knows this. "M-Madoka—"

Madoka leans closer, and Homura suddenly speeds up, pulling her along.

"We'll—be there soon!" she squeaks out, eyes now glued forward.

Madoka's grin softens to a smile. She wraps her arms around Homura's arm, increasing her pace to once again join her side.

"Thank you, Homura-chan."

Homura glances over, just in time for Madoka to kiss her cheek. She blushes, knowing that they're in public. She hears more giggles, and whether or not they're directed at them, she pushes her shoulders back. With narrowed eyes, she looks around, ready to pounce at the first sign of antagonism; it's unwarranted, as the crowds around them are just other people who are enjoying this commercialized holiday.

She hears a familiar laugh, and turns to see Madoka grinning at her.

"Homura-chan somehow seems... much, much cooler today; cool enough to match her name. Though," she tilts her head, "maybe it should be that you're hot enough to match your name now."

Homura blinks. "E-Eh...?"

Madoka hugs her arm tighter, inevitably pulling Homura closer. "Remember? You always say that you lose to your name; that it doesn't fit someone like you... but," her eyes flicker down, and then back up, "I knew that it fit you perfectly, even when I first met you."

Another blink, before Homura turns away in embarrassment. "I'm—not..."

"You are," Madoka tells her firmly, "and I won't let *anyone* say anything bad about my girlfriend."

Homura ducks her head, though Madoka can see the tips of her red ears.

Madoka squeezes her hand, giving Homura a smile when she finally looks up. Homura shyly smiles, and squeezes back.

\\

She leans against her chair, self-conscious as she continues to watch different couples as they pass by. Despite it being an event where tickets were required as admission, it's still crowded, and she's saving this table as Madoka lines up for their complementary meal.

She's sure that a few people keep looking her way, but she has no idea why. Nervous, she pulls out her phone to once again go through the guide to see which event they should try next.

As she's reading through the descriptions, she hears the scraping of a chair, and quickly looks up in alarm, afraid that someone is taking the chair away.

An unfamiliar guy smiles at her, holding out his hand in greeting. "Now, what kind of boyfriend would leave such a pretty girl alone?"

She doesn't react to his words, and merely stares at him blankly. He's grinning widely, and she slowly slides her eyes to the side, looking for, and hoping that a familiar pink is returning soon.

He clears his throat, and she frowns as she glances at him once more.

"I would never leave my girlfriend alone, especially not one as beautiful as you."

She looks at him, slightly perplexed when it finally dawns that he's trying to pick up a date at a Valentine's event.

"Uhm... this—is a couple's only event..."

He smugly places his elbows on the table, leaning forward to rest his chin on his hands. "Sometimes the one you arrive with isn't the one you leave with." He waggles his eyebrows at her, and she blinks in response.

She turns back to her phone. "Uhm, no thank you. I'm—happy with who I'm with..."

He falls back into the chair, his hands now resting on the arm rests. "Don't be so quick to turn me down, babe. I drove here today, and I definitely don't mind giving you a ride home. Something I'm sure your boyfriend won't do."

There's something about his attitude that strikes her the wrong way, and her eyebrows furrow in annoyance.

He opens his mouth, and her eyes narrow.

"I'm—not here with my boyfriend—I'm here with my girlfriend."

His eyebrows shoot up, and his face twists into a sneer. Before he can say anything, he's suddenly standing when there's a drink poured into his lap.

He yelps, and turns to the offender with a glare.

Madoka quickly walks to Homura's seat, placing a hand on her arm. "Are you okay, Homura-chan?" She turns to the guy, holding out her tray of food as a warning, "if you don't leave us alone, you're going to have to wash this off your clothes too."

He's about to reply, but stops when he realizes that a few of the other tables are watching.

He awkwardly clears his throat. "Alright, geez." He holds his hands out, and slowly backs away. "Girls these days..."

Madoka sighs in relief when he disappears into the crowd. She places the tray down on the table, before turning to Homura.

"I'm sorry I took so long, Homura-chan. I really thought we wouldn't have to worry about those guys at a place like this..." Her voice trails off when she sees Homura gripping her phone tightly, and gently places a hand on hers.

Homura jumps, and Madoka can see her trembling in her seat.

"Ah..." She glances to the chair that's covered in hot cocoa, and smiles. "Homura-chan, scoot over."

Homura blinks, but Madoka is already moving to sit. She squeaks, and tries to make room to accommodate her.

Madoka grins, wiggling her body and bumping their shoulders together to get more comfortable. "It's a good thing we're both so small." She pokes Homura's cheek, "though, you could still put on some more weight."

When Homura remains silent, Madoka gently strokes her cheek.

"It's okay, Homura-chan." She leans forward, and when Homura feels contact on her face, her eyes widen, though her attempts at pulling away are hindered as she's stuck in her seat.

"M-Madoka—"

Madoka smiles, eyes flicking to the side, "Homura-chan, you do know we're... at a couples only event." She turns her head, searching the crowds for an example, and quickly lands on the table that's right across. "See?" she gives a subtle nod, and Homura looks over, immediately blushing and ducking her head when she sees that couple being particularly affectionate.

"Uhm...t-that is..." She slips her phone back into her pocket, still avoiding looking at Madoka's face.

Madoka hums lightly, facing forward as her hands reach for the tray of food. The food is surprisingly still warm, and she chews on a fry thoughtfully.

"Homura-chan?"

"Y-Yes, Madoka?"

She finishes the fry, and reaches for another one. "Where are we going afterwards?"

Homura turns to her, blinking in surprise. Before she can reply, Madoka holds the fry to her lips.

"Say 'ah,' Homura-chan."

Homura's eyes widen. She glances around nervously, but Madoka is unrelenting.

"'Ah,' Homura-chan."

Madoka smiles, watching as a dust of red blooms on Homura's cheeks.

"A-Ah..."

After the fry is deposited into Homura's mouth, Madoka grabs another one for herself. A few bites, and she's licking her finger of the salt crystals. Still waiting for a response, she raises her eyebrows at Homura in expectation.

"Uhm..." Homura shyly reaches for a fry, "a-afterwards, we have a, uhm, dinner reservation..." She shakily holds up the fry, and without missing a beat, Madoka opens her mouth to accept it.

"Okay," she says in between bites, "let's hurry and finish eating then, Homura-chan, so we can walk around."

Homura nods, and moves to help bring the tray closer.

/

With decorations in red and white and pink, and heart shaped items as far as the eye can see, she almost feels like she's trapped within some strange world—a strange, couples only kind of world, still filled with lots and lots of people.

Madoka seems to be enjoying the atmosphere though, and she's the one dragging them to the different booths, each one offering something unique for every couple.

After they finish making matching charm bracelets, Homura's stifling a yawn when Madoka turns to her.

She gently brushes Homura's bangs back, "are you tired, Homura-chan?"

A quick shake of her head, "n-no!" She lowers her voice, "no, I'm, uhm, fine."

She is ready to defend herself again, but Madoka merely nods, her one hand fiddling with the bracelet to readjust the strap.

When she's done, she turns to Homura with a smile. "There's one more tent I want to drop by, and then we'll get out of here?"

Homura blinks. "But—" she checks the time on her phone, before slipping it back into her jacket pocket, "there's still... two hours until our reservation?" She looks almost panicked, "a-are you not having fun here, Madoka? Is there—something wrong? Did—"

Madoka squeezes her hand. "No, I'm having lots of fun here, Homura-chan."

"Then—"

Madoka cuts her off, gently tugging her along, "...you know, whenever they had those fliers for couple only events, I always thought... that it'd be nice to go there someday, and celebrate Valentine's with someone special..." They weave past a slower walking couple in front, "and, okay," she grins at Homura, "everything's so pink, how could I not enjoy it?"

Homura smiles, though Madoka can still see she's waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Madoka runs her thumb over Homura's fingers, giving her a brief glance out of the corner of her eye. "Homura-chan, was this," she glances around, "really your idea?"

Homura's reaction is immediate: her eyes widen, though she quickly tries to look away.

"Y-Yes, it—"

Madoka squeezes her hand, and she lowers her head in defeat.

"N-No." She exhales softly, her shoulders slumping. "Your mother helped me..."

Madoka smiles, and guides Homura to the side and out of the crowd. "I know."

Homura raises her head in surprise, eyes still wide. "W-What?" Her lips dip down, "she told you? She said she wouldn't say anything—"

Madoka shakes her head. "She didn't—" she leans against the railing, absently watching all the different couples pass by, and feeling something in her chest tighten when she sees Homura in front of her. "She didn't tell me," she says, smiling at Homura's confused expression. "Just..." she gestures to her outfit with her free hand, "this kind of has Mama's signature all over it." She places the same hand to her hip, "not to mention, your reservation is probably to some fancy restaurant. If the dress didn't give it away, that would have."

Again, Homura averts her eyes, this time in shame. "I'm—sorry, I just thought that... you'd like something special, but I couldn't think of anything—a-and—"

Madoka smiles, stepping forward to wrap her arms around Homura's waist. She hugs her tightly, pressing her face against her neck. "You know you don't have to do all this just to impress me, Homura-chan."

"But..." Homura presses closer, "y-you're amazing, and I just," her voice drops to a whisper, "I just want to make you happy..."

Madoka feels that pull in her chest again, and she gives Homura another tight hug. "Just hearing that makes me plenty happy, Homura-chan."

Homura blushes, eyes now nervously darting around.

Madoka nods, already knowing that Homura will constantly be on edge as long as they're here. "Okay, change of plans, Homura-chan. We're leaving."

"Wha—"

Madoka gives her a wink. "I actually asked Mama for some help too..."

Homura blinks. "Y-You did?"

Madoka grins, this time holding a finger to her lips. "Yes, but..." her voice trails off, and she starts walking, dragging Homura with her.

"M-Madoka?"

She remains a few steps ahead of her, scouring through the crowds, and finding the clearest path as they make their way to the exit.

Homura stumbles, and Madoka immediately pulls back to help steady her on her feet. "I'm sorry, are you okay, Homura-chan?"

She nods, a small blush now present on her cheeks. "Yes—I'm fine... s-sorry..."

Madoka sighs, before she leans forward, and gives Homura a very brief peck on the lips. She reacts as expected, but Madoka holds fast on her hand, keeping Homura from jumping away.

"Let's go, Homura-chan."

"But..."

Madoka suddenly leans close, until their faces are a mere breath away. "Let's go, okay, Homura-chan?" she asks softly.

Homura gulps, "o-okay."

\\

The streets are filled with couples, but the atmosphere outside is a lot more subdued, and Madoka can almost see the noticeable change in Homura now that they're out of that crowd.

She knows that she's still so painfully shy, and that even after their time together, Homura's self-esteem has hardly improved since the day she met her.

She's getting better, but she knows how many doubts and how many things she holds back because she's afraid.

She squeezes Homura's hand, prompting a curious but nervous glance.

"Homura-chan?"

"Yes, Madoka?"

"Can you buy me a drink from the vending machine?"

Homura blinks, but Madoka gently pushes her into the direction of one nearby.

"I need to make a phone call." She pulls out her phone as Homura continues to stare. "Also," she glances around, "try not to get hit on your way there?"

Homura fumbles, "eh? But—"

Madoka grins, pushing her gently. "I'm kidding. I really do need to make a phone call though; can you get me a strawberry milk?"

She turns her attention to her phone, and Homura watches as she punches the speed dial. Madoka places the phone to her ear, and when she finds Homura still staring, she makes a shooing gesture. Finally, Homura snaps out of her daze and heads over to buy her drink.

When she returns with two strawberry milks, she catches the end of Madoka's conversation, just in time to hear her saying bye.

She waits for Madoka to pocket her phone, until she hands off her drink. "Who... was it?"

"Thanks, Homura-chan." Madoka immediate tears at the plastic holding the straw in place. "It's a secret," she says as she jabs the straw into the opening. Her lips tug up, "don't sulk, Homura-chan."

"I'm not—sulking..."

"Uh huh." Madoka grins when she sees Homura almost pouting into her drink. "Don't pout either, Homura-chan."

"I'm not—pouting..."

/

"We're home!"

Silence greets them again when they enter the house, and this time, Homura is the one listening as Madoka slips off her shoes and jacket.

"Homura-chan?"

"Hm...?"

"Mama and Papa won't be home until later; they're taking Takkun to the park, and then going to the restaurant for dinner."

Homura blinks, but Madoka tugs her forward.

"Ah, w-wait," she immediately panics, turning to pull off her shoes and jacket. She leaves them neatly by Madoka's, and then follows her inside.

"Earlier," Madoka explains as she leads them to the kitchen, "I was on the phone with Mama." She glances over her shoulder, giving Homura a smile, "I kind of... switched your plan around with mine instead. I hope you don't mind, Homura-chan."

"Uhm," she walks with her, eyes nervously darting around, "w-what do you mean?"

Madoka stops in front of the dining table. She pulls back one of the chairs, gesturing for Homura to sit down. Still confused, she slowly lowers herself to the chair.

"Madoka?"

Madoka remains standing, and gently taps Homura's nose with her finger. "This morning, after I was supposed to make my cookies, I was also supposed to prepare some of the dishes that I had originally planned to cook you for dinner."

She sees Homura's eyes flicker around, lips parting as she processes Madoka's words.

"...You—were going to cook for me?" she asks softly.

Madoka nods.

Homura's face drops, "and I—"

Madoka cuts her off, leaning forward to kiss her on the lips. "I already know what you're thinking, and no, you didn't. I had a lot of fun at the park," she holds up her wrist, "and I'm definitely going to be wearing this whenever possible." She leans forward once more, resting her

forehead on Homura's. "But, there's no point in going somewhere if the both of us aren't having fun."

Homura glances at her briefly, before looking away.

Madoka pulls back as she lifts her hands to gently slap Homura's cheeks. "While I'm prepping dinner, you can rest on the couch, Homura-chan. I know you didn't get much sleep last night."

Madoka moves to head to the kitchen, but the scraping of the chair has her turning back.

"L-Let me help you," Homura says as she stands up. When she sees Madoka frown, she ducks her head, her hands twisting nervously.

There's a soft sigh, and to her surprise, she feels a hand on her wrist. She looks up to see Madoka smiling at her.

"Okay, Homura-chan. Thank you."

She smiles in response, face lighting up at Madoka's words.

Without warning, Madoka suddenly throws her arms around her, and hugs her tightly.

"M-Madoka...?"

Madoka shakes her head, and waits until Homura returns her hug, before she reluctantly lets go.

"You can help me with the vegetables, Homura-chan."

"Okay..."

\\

After they change into more comfortable clothes, and Homura switches back to her glasses, they start working on their dinner preparations. The atmosphere is cozy: the sound of the TV is playing in the background, and she can hear the slow and methodical chops as Homura works her way through the vegetables. She glances behind her, smiling at Homura's hunched posture, already picturing how

concentrated her face must be as she tries to make each slice as close in size as possible.

She remembers how fearful Homura had been the first time she had held a knife, but her one hand is now expertly curled in, and she already knows that each cut is textbook perfect.

The sounds continue, and she smiles, taking it all in. A few years from now, and she could imagine herself living together with Homura, going through their days just like this.

She breathes in deeply, before breathing out slowly. She turns back to her own task, still smiling to herself.

/

For the most part, dinner is made successfully, minus the plate of vegetables that had slightly overcooked when they had been a bit too distracted to notice.

The first bite, and Homura had complemented her on her cooking, pointing out that she has definitely gotten a lot better.

Knowing that Homura is a horrible liar, Madoka had grinned at the praise, secretly thanking her dad for teaching her how to cook over the weekends.

The cookies had been dessert, and after they had eaten their fill, and the leftovers had been wrapped, they had worked together to wash the dishes.

A brief water fight had ensued, though they stopped when Madoka saw Homura start to shiver from the cold. She had marched her upstairs to get changed, while she mopped the floor, and finished the last of the plates.

Once done, she too had changed into dry clothes, and after Homura had taken her medication, they had retired to the couch. There's a warm blanket shared between them, with the TV still on, set to a low volume.

Madoka smiles, watching as Homura's eyes blink slowly, and every so often, her head dips down, before she catches herself, and shakes her head to wake up.

She gently brushes Homura's bangs back, watching as unfocused eyes turn her way.

"You didn't have to help me make dinner, Homura-chan."

Homura blinks, trying to rouse herself from falling asleep. "Yes, I did," she murmurs.

Madoka gently threads her fingers in Homura's hair. As she runs her hand through the strands, she watches as Homura's eyes droop close, and can feel her breaths slowing down.

Her hand stops, and she absently stares at Homura's straightened hair. "Homura-chan?"

"Hmm...?" her voice is soft, and she's sure that any second now, Homura's going to drift into sleep.

"Your hair... and your contacts... that was Mama's idea too, wasn't it?"

Homura blinks again, this time stirring to sit up. Her eyebrows furrow, "y-yes...? Did you..." she glances at Madoka in worry, "did it not suit me...?"

Madoka shakes her head, smiling. "No, it suited you really, really well, actually." She leans forward, burying her face into the crook of Homura's neck. "Too well, really."

Homura tilts her head, trying to get a clear view of Madoka's face, but Madoka stubbornly clings to her.

"Madoka...?" She feels hands slip around her waist.

"...I was really, really jealous, Homura-chan," Madoka whispers into her ear.

Her eyes widen, "e-eh?"

Madoka hugs her tighter. "You—never notice it, but you're probably one of the prettiest girls in our class."

She tries to sit up, but Madoka refuses to budge. "Madoka...?"

Madoka presses her face against Homura's neck, "though, usually no one notices because of your glasses and your cute braids..."

Homura blushes, shifting her body to better accommodate her. "Uhm..."

"But this week," Madoka murmurs, "everyone was looking at you." She turns her head, "and I didn't like it, one bit."

"Ah..." Homura wraps her arms around Madoka, "uhm, I'm sorry—I didn't mean to..."

Madoka shakes her head, finally pulling away, and showing Homura her flushed face. "No, it's..." she smiles, embarrassed, "it's just..." she lowers her head, resting it against Homura's. "...it's silly, I know. I'm sorry."

Homura hugs her tighter. "N-No! It's—" she falters, feeling the heat creep around her neck, "I—kind of understand..."

Madoka sighs softly, letting her body meld against Homura's.

"But, uhm, if—if Madoka doesn't like it, I'll go back to my old look..."

Madoka sits up, shaking her head. "No! That's—okay, Homura-chan. That's just me being silly. It's a really good look on you. Don't—change back because of me."

She snuggles against her, "truthfully, it's—still kind of really strange, uhm, wearing contacts... and... my hair keeps getting in my way, especially for gym..."

Madoka smiles, running her hands through Homura's hair. "Mm, maybe we could tie it in a single braid then? Though, you'd probably look really good with a ponytail too..." She sighs, almost dreamily. "Your hair is so nice, Homura-chan. Maybe I should start growing mine out, too."

Homura hums, her eyes closing in content. "You'd—look good too, either way..." she murmurs softly.

Madoka grins, knowing that Homura is once again falling asleep. She continues her administrations, feeling the gentle rise and fall of her chest, and hearing as Homura's breath slows down.

She's careful as she lifts her head, eyes glancing to the corner of the TV screen to check the time. She lowers her head, calculating that they still had another hour until her parents returned.

Homura is all but asleep, and she settles back into her spot, smiling as she cuddles against her. She's warm and toasty, and though they had decided to finish the night with a movie, her early start this morning is catching up to her, and she feels her own eyes drooping close.

They're both sleeping with the TV still playing in the background when her parents return. They smile at the sight, and while Tomohisa heads off to put Takkun to bed, Junko dims the lights, and clicks the TV off.

She's gentle as she leans down, kissing Madoka's forehead, before kissing Homura's. She smiles, and carefully removes Homura's glasses, placing them on the coffee table nearby.

"I hope you two had fun," she whispers, readjusting the blankets around them.

Her soft footsteps are heard as she makes her way through the house.

Silence, and Madoka sighs, still asleep, head moving to snuggle against Homura.

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She blinks at the dim lighting, her eyes squinting as they slowly readjust. The house is quiet, and she drops her head back down, but sits up once more when she realizes what had woken her up.

Her hand is on Homura's forehead, and she swipes her bangs to the side. She leans close to kiss her on the cheek, and her lips brush against the lone tear that trails down.

Homura makes a sound in her throat as her body twists, eyes still closed, still caught in whatever nightmare that haunts her dreams.

"Shh, it's okay, Homura-chan..." She strokes her forehead, knowing that sometimes, Homura still cried for her parents. "You're okay, Homura-chan."

Homura turns again, "Okaa-san—" there's a gasp, and wide eyes open as she finally wakes. She sniffles, and moves to wipe her eyes dry, but she finds something holding her arm down.

There's a hand to her face, and she flinches back. It takes her a moment, until she realizes the pink blur is Madoka.

Madoka gently dabs at Homura's eyes with her sleeve. Once she's done, she holds Homura in her arms, smiling sadly when she feels Homura bury her face against her neck.

"Did you have the same dream again, Homura-chan?" she asks softly.

A pause, before Homura gives her a small nod.

To her disappointment, Madoka pulls away. She smiles, gently stroking Homura's cheek with her thumb, using it to wipe at the remnants of her tears.

"Let's trade spots, Homura-chan."

With a bit of maneuvering, Madoka now leans against the couch as Homura lies on top of her.

She smiles as Homura slips her arms around her waist, hugging her as tightly as possible.

She remains holding her for as long as she likes, calming her fears, and showing her that she's not alone.

Finally, Homura lifts her head, "I'm okay..."

Madoka kisses the side of her head again, "we can stay like this longer; I don't mind, Homura-chan."

Without much prompting, Homura lowers her head back down, snuggling against the crook of Madoka's neck. "...We should probably head to bed now..." she murmurs, her eyes closing as she slowly relaxes.

"Mmhmm..." Madoka peers over Homura's head, checking the clock. "Valentine's is almost over." She smiles, turning her head to kiss Homura's cheek. "Happy Anniversary, Homura-chan."

"Happy Anniversary, Madoka."

They're both reluctant to move, and as Madoka runs her hand up and down Homura's back, Homura finds herself once again falling asleep.

"Homura-chan?"

"Hmm...?"

"I had a lot of fun today."

Homura blinks sleepily, "me too..."

"...If this keeps up, it'll be really hard to think of return gifts for White Day." Madoka smiles, closing her eyes as she holds Homura close, "and, if we ever break up, it'd be... really, really hard for anyone to even compare..."

Homura frowns, pressing her face against Madoka's neck. "That won't happen..."

By the sound of her voice, Madoka can tell that Homura is half asleep.

She runs her hand down Homura's back slowly, "you never know, Homura-chan. What if one day, you grow tired of me?"

Homura makes a sound of protest, "that—wouldn't happen..."

"Or, what if..." and this is something she has been thinking of lately, "what if... we end up going to different colleges? Four years apart is a long time... What if... what if you find someone else you like more than me...?"

Homura turns her head, eyes still closed, still half asleep. "Then... then, you'll just have to marry me after we graduate high school..."

Madoka's eyes open, and her hand freezes at Homura's words. "H-Homura-chan?"

Homura hugs her, snuggling closer. "Madoka... will be my wife..." Her voice trails off, and after a moment, Madoka realizes that Homura is fast asleep.

Her hand trails up and down Homura's back.

She smiles to herself. "Marriage, hm, Homura-chan? Maybe, if you asked me when you're awake..."

As she stares at Homura's sleeping face, there's a small bit of red that catches her eye: Homura still has her ribbons in her hair. She's gentle as she pulls the ribbons free, unwinding them to hold the fabric in her palm.

She kisses Homura's head, still smiling. "You're the best present I could ever ask for, Homura-chan. Good night."

After a bit of a struggle, the ribbons join Homura's glasses on the table.

Madoka settles back into her spot, readjusting the blanket over them as Homura snuggles against her.

She closes her eyes, listening to Homura's breathing, and using it to lull her to slee**p**.

AN: A little bit late, but uhm, it covers White Day too, and Homura day (***Homura day is everyday***).

Thank you for reading. I'll be... around. April, and then—whenever.